

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE IMMEDIATE 8938

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0373

E.O. 11652: X-GDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, HO, ES, NU

SUBJ: NICARAGUAN MEDIATION EFFORT IN HONDURAS/SALVADOR DISPUTE

1. FOREIGN MINISTER ALEJANDRO MONTIEL ARGUELLO WAS DISPATCHED ON ONE-DAY MISSION TO SAN SALVADOR AND TEGUCIGALPA JANUARY 22 IN ORDER TO SOUND OUT PARTIES ON STATUS OF PEACE MOVES AND TO ASSERT NICARAGUA'S LEGITIMATE INTEREST IN SEEING DISPUTE TERMINATED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. MONTIEL PROFESSED CONSIDERABLE

OPTIMISM ABOUT PEACE PROSPECT TO EMOFF ON EVENING OF JANUARY 22, CLAIMING THAT PEACE WAS NEARER THAN AT ANY TIME. HE HINTED BRIEFLY AT POSSIBLE NICARAGUAN ROLE IN SOLUTION. DURING CONVERSATION AT TEGUCIGALPA AIRPORT WITH OAS AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD, HE WAS SIMILARLY OPTIMISTIC, SAYING THAT HE WAS ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGED BY THE NEGOTIATING LATITUDE THAT HONDURAN FONMIN PERDOMO HAD BEEN GIVEN BY MELGAR AND MILITARY COUNCIL.

2. AT LUNCHEON MEETING JANUARY 23 WITH AMBASSADOR AND AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD, PRESIDENT SOMOZA DISCLOSED THAT HE HAD SENT MONTIEL TO TWO CAPITALS WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO INFORM BOTH CHIEFS OF STATE THAT UNLESS SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED SOON, NICARAGUA WOULD
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UNDERTAKE A FUNDAMENTAL REASSESSMENT OF ITS PARTICIPATION IN

CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET. SOMOZA STATED THAT MONTIEL USED A RATHER NOVEL ARGUMENT THAT HEAVY MILITARY EXPENDITURES BY TWO DISPUTANTS WAS SLOWING THEIR ECONOMIC GROWTH VIS A VIS NICARAGUA CAUSING THEIR WAGE LEVELS TO RISE MORE SLOWLY AND THEREBY ERODING NICARAGUA'S TRADING POSITION.

3. SOMOZA SAID HIS INITIATIVE WAS AIMED AT FAVORABLY INFLUENCING PRESENT HONDURAS-EL SALVADOR NEGOTIATING PROCESS AT A TIME WHEN IT SEEMED THAT SOME FORWARD MOVEMENT COULD BE MADE.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT SOMOZA HAS PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER WAGE DIFFERENTIAL PROBLEM, THE SOPHISTICATED ECONOMIC ARGUMENT USED TO ASSERT NICARAGUA'S CLAIM TO DIRECT INTEREST IN THE RESOLUTION WAS AT LEAST PARTLY A TACTICAL POSITION, EITHER AS SOMOZA CLAIMS, TO PRESSURE THE TWO SIDES, OR MERELY TO GET INVOLVED IN A POSSIBLE DENOUEMENT OF THE DISPUTE FOR PRESTIGE PURPOSES. SOMOZA EVADED A DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION BY THE AMBASSADOR TO WHAT IMPACT THE ARMS RACE BETWEEN THE TWO DISPUTANTS MIGHT HAVE

ON NICARAGUAN SECURITY AND NEED TO REFURBISH HIS OWN MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

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